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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, November 29, 1943.

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Cap. 2
Subject: "LEGUMES FOR LUNCH." Information from the home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
serve beans occasionally

Lunchtime seems a logical place in the day's menu to serve beans occasionally as a main dish. Beans are a good alternate for the scarcer protein foods like meat and eggs, and when you serve "alternates" you are helping food to "fight for freedom." You want something filling and hearty for lunch, but something a little different from the other two meals of the day. The "lunch" may be at home or at school or at work, or it might be a Sunday night lunch or supper.

The beans may be any kind of dried beans, or you could have their close cousins, peas or lentils. All beans are "legumes"----vegetables that grow on vines and form their seeds in pods. As the home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture explain, whatever kind of beans you serve, you'll get about the same food value--except for soybeans, which have the most protein and fat and the least starch. About half of each of the other beans is energy or fuel food. Beans also have the B vitamins, especially thiamine and riboflavin. They have iron, and many more food values. And they're good "pinch hitters" for protein foods like meat, fish, eggs and cheese, when these foods are short, although their protein is not quite the same.

New Englanders like the small white navy beans for the Saturday night beanpot. Southerners like limas, and black beans, and black-eyed peas and cow-peas; southwesterners, pinto beans and California pinks and red kidney beans. And almost everyone likes dried split green or yellow peas in soup, or lentils. Certain dishes have come to be specialties in one part of the country or another. You associate baked beans with Boston, for example, and chili con carne with



states close to the Mexican border. But you can make either of these dishes anywhere, with any kind of beans you can get, and the dish will be good. In fact, you could ring a good many changes in your menus by serving different kinds of bean in the recipes you usually use, or cook each type of bean in different ways. You can make beans into loaves, into soups, or serve them with brown or tomato gravy or white sauce. You can cook beans tender and then use them hot or cold in salads, or mashed and seasoned for salad fillings. Or combine them with small amounts of meat to stretch the meat in stews and hashes.

If you happen to be a sponsor for a school lunch project, you know that you can use a number of bean dishes on lunch menus for which the Food Distribution Administration will pay part of the cost. A lunch that provides from one-third to one-half of the day's food requirements for each child might feature bean or pea soup, chowder, or stew with vegetables, and include a raw vegetable or fruit, bread and butter or margarine, and milk. Here are some of the dishes the Food Distribution Administration recommends for such lunches:

Green or yellow split pea soup with vegetables; or lentil and vegetable soup; or soybean casserole; kidney beans, tomatoes and rice; bean and vegetable soup; bean and vegetable chowder; bean, barley and vegetable soup; bean or pea stew with tomato and onion; soya-vegetable chowder.

Now about cooking beans---any kind of dried beans or peas. It takes several hours of slow cooking to make these legumes tender. To economize on fuel, neighbor families who all like beans once a week sometimes take turns cooking a large batch that is then divided up. First pick the beans over, then wash them in several changes of cold water, and put them to soak for 5 or 6 hours or over-night. Use soft water for soaking them if you can get it. Rain water is fine. Hard water toughens the skins of beans.

Don't throw away the water the beans soaked in. It contains vitamins and

minerals dissolved out of the beans. Use this water for cooking them. You can add more if you need it, to cover the beans, and put in a teaspoonful of salt for each quart of water. Simmer the beans over a low fire until they are tender but not broken. Add more water from time to time, because the beans will take up a lot of water. If you don't watch the pot the beans may dry out and burn before they're done.

When the beans are tender they're ready to season and eat. But if you want more flavor, you can put in a piece of salt pork or a ham bone while they are cooking, or add a little sausage or bacon fat. One good dish made with the cooked beans is beans "au gratin." Cover the beans in a baking dish with a sauce made by combining white sauce and tomato catsup. Sprinkle the top with grated cheese and bread crumbs and brown in the oven. Or make the beans into "bean sausages." Mash them and mix them with a beaten egg, sage seasoning, salt and pepper to taste, and enough milk or bean liquid to moisten so you can shape the "sausage" rolls. Dip them in egg and crumbs and brown in a little melted fat. You can use this same mixture for a bean loaf, made like a meat loaf, and add any other flavoring you like.

To make bean or pea soup, cook a piece of salt pork with the beans from the start, also some onion and celery, and use twice as much water as you would for simmering the beans. When the beans are soft enough to mash, take out the salt pork and set it aside. Put the beans through a strainer. Cut the salt pork up in little pieces and return to the soup. Thicken the soup with a little flour mixed with cold water, to keep the bean pulp from settling to the bottom. Stir, reheat and season as you like.

